

Background

ECSA ran its 2nd round of Class Rep Conferences in late November & early December, focussing on 'Feedback and Self-Evaluation'. These meetings had the following purposes:

1. To inform & engage students in their role in the college's self-evaluation process, primarily occurring at the course level in semester 2.
2. To gather feedback on student's experience of Learning & Teaching through a focussed workshop
3. To use that feedback to paint a picture of Learning & Teaching at Edinburgh College, share best practice, and provide data & evidence for ECSA's Annual Learning & Teaching report
4. Help inform the work ECSA does in supporting the college with 'How Good Is Our College?'

Workshop

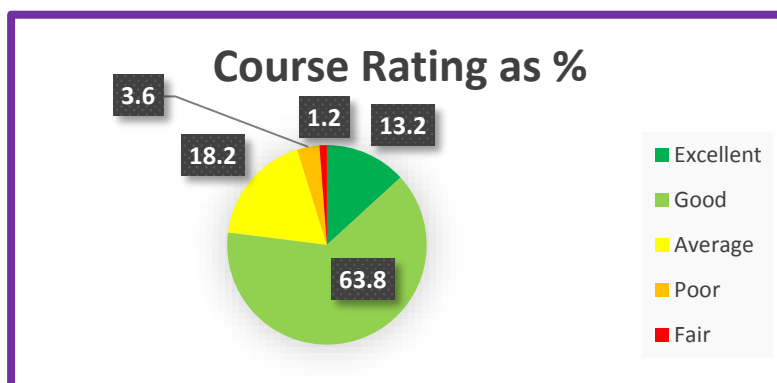
The workshop took students through the key steps of self-evaluation and where they, as Class Reps, fit in, covering the 'A.B.C.D of Effective feedback' which is a core part of the sparqs Class Rep Training, and ensuring reps are equipped with the skills to effectively take part. Further to this, ECSA talked Class Reps through why it is so important they get involved in shaping their learning. Class Reps were incredibly receptive to this, and the workshop.

The workshop itself focussed on rating their learning experiences on a scale between Excellent and Poor,

Over 77% of respondents rated their course as Good or Excellent with the key takeaway across the board that student enjoy their courses and their learning is excellent and staff are knowledgeable, experts within the subject area they teach in.

However there is always room to improve and across all responses students' highlighted things that could be better and even some solutions.

with a section to provide comment on why they choose that answer. They were then asked to discuss what is good about their course, what could be improved and how it could be improved. Class Reps were encouraged to use the 'Student Learning Experience' diagram which covers all the components of a student's learning experience whilst at College. In total 83 reps took part across the 4 campuses in the workshops, from a broad range of courses and departments.



Learning & Teaching Themes

Overall, there were 4 key themes that emerged as areas for improvement within the college. If worked upon, these key area could improve the student learning experience, increasing the likelihood students would rate their learning experience as 'excellent'.

1. Course Organisation	2. Co-creation of the curriculum
<p>Excellent examples of course organisation included 'Course teams that worked together' - including the use of assessment timetables given out at the start of the year. Well-structured lessons plans, clear use of Moodle for the uploading of learning resources in a timely manner for revision purposes & consistent communication with students when issues arose. This also included having the correct resources, facilities & equipment to facilitate a great learning experience.</p> <p>Students who felt any of these areas were not being delivered on, seemed far more likely to mark their course as 'good' or worse, regardless of quality of teaching or their enjoyment of the subject area.</p>	<p>Students repeatedly mentioned they wanted more say on their curriculum, from the length of time spent on specific subjects, to having a class discussion with staff on any non-optional units or opportunities on value-added experience.</p> <p>While student wants need to be balanced with staff capacity & resourcing, it would still benefit staff and students to have these conversations throughout the academic year and, where possible, reaching consensus. This would empower students to feel like they are taking ownership of their learning</p>
3. Flexible and varied learning styles	4. Feedback
<p>Courses that implemented a range of different teaching methods received much more positive feedback from students. Taking a flexible approach to learning ensured content was delivered in a variety of ways that enhanced learning, and students appreciated the extra effort to create engaging learning experiences</p>	<p>The courses rated the best were consistently praised for having great feedback that was useful and timely. Whether it was summative, formative, informal, or formal feedback, it was all appreciated by students, who said it helped them understand how to improve.</p> <p>In courses where work was uploaded and 'not marked' there was a clear drop in satisfaction as students viewed this as unhelpful to their learning as they couldn't know how to improve or gauge the quality of their work.</p>

Thematic feedback

Excellent

Students rated courses Excellent for a variety of reasons on a course by course basis and this represented around **13.2%** of responses. What was apparent was how many of these courses students cited multiple examples of 'positive aspects' which made these course stand out as an excellent learning experience. For example:

- Excellent teaching staff who were positive, approachable and built a strong rapport with the class by engaging with them. They also took time to answer student questions on course material and were seen to be supportive of students
- Classes were organised, had clear criteria, and assessments/assessment timetables. Students felt that curriculum teams worked together to ensure the smooth running of a course
- Resources are plentiful such as books, equipment & study materials for self-study
- Online spaces like Moodle are well laid out, proactively used, including uploading lectures, notes & 'extra reading'
- A use of varied teaching techniques, balancing the use of group work, class discussion, quizzes and various other tools to make classes interesting and engaging
- Excellent uses of feedback mechanisms on work that were positive and constructive allowing students to grow and develop, both from work done in and out of class
- Teaching staff bringing their own unique 'flare' to class that shows their passion and knowledge of the sector
- Practical demonstrations in many subject areas greatly enhanced the learning experience, especially those who wanted to work in their respective industries.

Good

The vast majority of courses received a **rating of 'Good' (53)** accounting for **63.8%** of all evaluations ECSA received. Students rated these courses citing mostly the learning and teaching being good, and having supportive lecturers. However, they highlighted areas for improvement that make up the whole student experience, and, if implemented, could have possibly raised these courses to an Excellent:

- That they had excellent teaching staff on the whole, but some lecturers' teaching styles or methods were either restrictive or more difficult to follow compared to others
- Use of online resources such as Moodle could be inconsistent or under utilised
- Course organisation wasn't always great, timetables change, classrooms not fit for purpose for that particular class, and that teaching teams didn't always seem to talk to each other
- They wish there had been assessment timetables at the beginning of the year so as to better manage assessments and avoid 'crowded' deadlines
- More use of varied teaching styles or co-creation of learning i.e the class helping to decide the curriculum, where it was appropriate, for example, what additional modules should be studied or the length of time spent on specific content

Average

15 courses received a rating of average or 18.2% of respondents. While, on the whole, student who rated their courses as average highlighted enjoying their course, they had poorer satisfaction in different aspects of the course:

- Courses more likely to have cancelled classes, or be in a room not 'fit for purpose'
- Access to resources would be more limited or facilities are in need of updating
- Feedback delays or feedback not seen to be helpful to improving students learning
- Moodle would be underutilised by some teaching staff

Fair

Students who rated their courses below average cited a less-than-stellar learning experience and highlighted an inconsistent experience across their subjects.

- Feedback ranged from poor to not having work submitted marked at all
- Students cited a lack of engagement from teaching staff
- Teaching methods seemed very rigid mostly sticking to one style regardless of audience or subject.
- Within course teams there is a lack of communication, assessments and deadlines not effectively communicated or
- Students highlighted poor class dynamics and class cohesion
- Students included either a complete lack of resources, broken equipment or poor learning spaces.

Poor

Only one course was rated as poor, and while this isn't what we would like to see for any course, it's great to know it's a minority experience for students. Much of the issues of this course is similar to the responses to the courses categorised as 'fair', including the class cohesion and experience for learners on things mostly outside the actual teaching. I.e the college facilities, ease of access, etc.

What Happens Next

It is clear Learning & Teaching at Edinburgh College, overall, is a positive experience, and a massive thank you to the Class Reps for taking part and giving us their incredibly useful and critical feedback. This now gives ECSA & the College more baseline information and a real sense of what students value within their learning experience. Class Reps, and more broadly speaking, students, have lots of thoughts on their learning and are keen to share that feedback with us, we just need to make sure the college and ECSA are providing those engagement opportunities and having those all-important two-way conversations.

This work will tie in with our end of year teaching report & will go hand in hand with the ECSA Excellence Awards, launching later on in the academic year, both of which will ensure ECSA's continued commitment to aid the College in engaging with Education Scotland's 'How Good Is Our College?'.

ECSA hopes this data is useful for curriculum teams, and would encourage all teaching staff to engage with class reps throughout the Self Evaluation meetings that will be happening shortly.

This report will be made available to students & staff with the hope that it aids and influences more conversation around providing the very best Learning & Teaching and promotes sharing of best practice.

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